

In 1878 McCormick had perfected his "self-binder" and the farmers thought nothing could beat it. This means of harvesting proved, in its rapidity and saving of the crop, so successful that gleaners following the harvester were entirely unnecessary. It did the work of five or six men. Still later came the "combined harvester" which cut the grain, threshed it and sacked it. New methods are being brought into action so that grain harvesting today has little or no resemblance to the tedious, hard labor of those early days. In those days each farm was a kingdom of its own, so harvest time was something to keep everyone busy.

WHEN THRESHERS CAME

By Alice Morrey Baily in
Deseret News

Such gloried days as this will soon be gone
When calioptic whistles slit the dawn,
In heralding the threshers creeping roar
From farm to farm across the valley floor.
The wagons wait with balls of twine and sacks,
The granary stands apart with empty bins
And soon no shout will rise above the din.

Inside the kitchen bustling women vie
With neighbor women making cake and pie,
Preparing savory food and lengthened board
Against the rush of the hungry horde
For only these, the harvesters of wheat,
Can gorge the fabled way that threshers eat.

Red kerchiefed men, swathed deep against the chaff
Lean on their pitch forks, bandy work, and laugh.
The engine coughs and starts the oily belts,
The straw mound grows, the bundled grain stack melts.
The forkmen pitch with rhythm to the maw

The carrier belches forth its plumes of straw,
The sackers catch the stream of kerneled gold
The wagons shuttle forth to fill the hold.

This day is sliding down the historied trail
Of clumsy tools, with wind and scythe and flail,
Lost as turnstile's creaking, hour by hour,
Which measured out the sad-eyed horses' power.
Today a lone machine can harvest grain
A lone and hungry man comes home again.

THRESHING

By Adrian Hansen

"Next to Christmas and the Fourth of July, the most fun of the entire year was at threshing time.

"The huge grain stacks stood like yellow igloos ready to be consumed by the machine. The wagons, loaded with poles, iron rods, chains, and all the equipment would come first. Finally, the big, red, box-like threshing machine, drawn by two teams of horses, would be driven in between the stacks and staked into position. The straw carrier at the end of the machine reached way out behind like a flat tail, with its endless chain of slats ready to carry the straw into the stack. At the end, were the rows of teeth to grasp the grain and force it into the machine.

"Now came the exciting part. The heavy iron driving rod was put into position, reaching from the thresher and the separator, to the horse-power platform. This was a floor over a huge cogwheel lying flat on the hub. From this platform several poles extended, usually five poles. To each of these poles was hitched a team of horses, and they traveled round and round in a circle pulling the large wheel which connected with a smaller cogwheel on the end of the big driving rod. As this rotated, it propelled the mechanism of the separator.

"Of course, we never paid much attention to all this detail. The thing to really see and hear was the shout of the driver getting all the horses to start at once. Then there was the low growl of the machine as it began to operate, getting louder and higher in pitch as it picked up speed. Soon the noise was so deafening everyone had to shout to be heard. The dust rose in stifling clouds, especially back of the straw carrier. The man who worked there wore goggles over his eyes and his big red bandanna handkerchief was tied over his mouth and nose. All the workers wore bandannas tied around their necks to keep out the chaff.

"By now the operation had settled into a rhythm of movement. The horses stepped the same gait around and around the circle, the driver turning and lightly cracking his whip. The men on the stack dropped the bundles in turns onto the feeder platform. Two men stood there, the first with a sharp knife with which he cut the twine from each bundle before pushing it to the next man, who fed it evenly, heads first, into the machine.

"The grain poured from the side of the machine into the half-bushel measures which were emptied into sacks, and the grain was carried to the granary. Each man carried three measures each trip. It took at least three men to carry the grain from the thresher to the granary, and they ran on the way back with the empty sacks. They often used the sacks to give a playful slap at the man with a load on his *86*